VisNetic MailFlow

Customer Email: Handle with Care

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Executive Summary

The viability of a business is built upon strong customer relationships – at the core of which is trust. Effective communications build customer trust.

The vast majority of customer communications occur electronically – and email is a primary media. Yet when customers conduct business via email, they may feel apprehensive:

Effective communications build customer trust.

- Will my message be intercepted, treated as "low priority," or worse, not handled at all?
- Will my message be categorized improperly, and, if so, will I receive a boilerplate response to a question that I didn't ask?

Effective communications occur when the customer can message within an environment that feels comfortable, such as, email – without jeopardizing quality of service.

Conversely, the business's customer care agent must be trained to understand the unique communication characteristics of email versus instant messaging, voice and other customer-facing media. Similarly, customer care management must be able to measure the quality of email handling against business activity.

Therefore, this paper will address:

- The impact of email mismanagement
- Benchmarking and quality management
- VisNetic MailFlow's approach toward humanizing the customer's email experience, while strengthening the back office workflow.

Email Mismanagement: Jeopardizing Customer Trust

Noticeable causes of email mismanagement include:

- Over-reliance on auto responders
- Over-reliance on ad hoc, agent-created messages to customers
- Poorly defined handling processes
- Poorly defined management of handling processes
- Poor or lack of process for knowledge-sharing among agents

Email mismanagement can be subtle and inconspicuous. Common cases include:

- Using a "one size fits all" technology model across business units and functional areas – such as, sales, marketing, public relations, fulfillment and customer care. Some examples:
  - Customer relationship management (CRM) applications
  - Content management systems with integrated email capability
  - Email response management systems (ERMS)
  - "Home-grown" applications
- An architecturally complex email management technology, which may "work" though not optimally.
- Statistical reports, instead of analytic reports that align statistics to business activity

Whether noticeable or subtle, the results are the same, which include:

- Delays in responding to customer inquiries
- Lack of administrative oversight and accountability
- Ongoing failures in meeting service level agreements

Managing customer email is technically and culturally different from managing customer inquiries through other media types, such as chat and voice. The customer care center must understand those differences -- from the customer's perspective.

Managing Email from the Customer's Perspective

Customers use the communicative media that feels comfortable and efficiently meet their needs.

Email is a preferred means of communication by customers who do not have the time or desire for a live discussion (as is the case with chat and voice). Email messaging provides a written and machine-dated record of each discussion between a customer care agent and the customer. Email messages are sent at the customer's convenience – that is, without relevance to the customer care center's "open for business" hours.

Email messaging uses "store and forward" routing. Nonetheless, the customer expects near "real-time" responsiveness. **The "clock starts ticking" as soon as the customer clicks the send button.**

VisNetic MailFlow

VisNetic MailFlow is focused solely on the management of customer email. The framework is intuitive in design, so as to humanize the relationship between the customer care agent and the customer. This one-to-one relationship emulates the interactive nature of chat and voice within an email message conversation.

Similar to PBX routing of individual phone lines, VisNetic MailFlow automatically routes customer email messages to the appropriate customer care agent. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: VisNetic MailFlow Framework
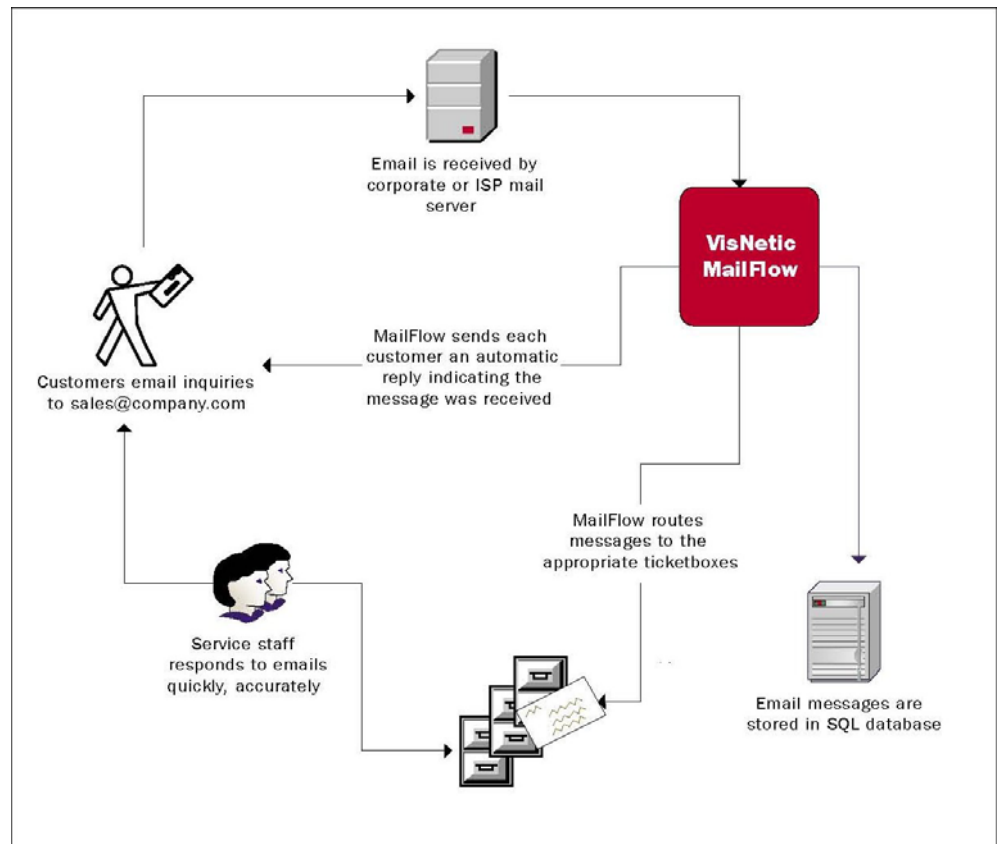
Features

VisNetic MailFlow's rich feature set is designed from the agent's perspective, as well as for customer care center efficiency. Functionality includes:

VisNetic MailFlow's rich feature set is designed from the agent's perspective.

- Powerful email routing and workflow processing
- Email standards and policy enforcement
- Automatic generation and tracking of service incidents
- Excellent alternative to traditional employee monitoring
- Comprehensive reporting and analysis
- Instant access to customer communications history
- Robust security and administration features
- Integrated logging and alerting facilities
- An optional anti-virus plug-in

The VisNetic MailFlow user-interface is Web-based. There is no desktop VisNetic MailFlow software to manage.
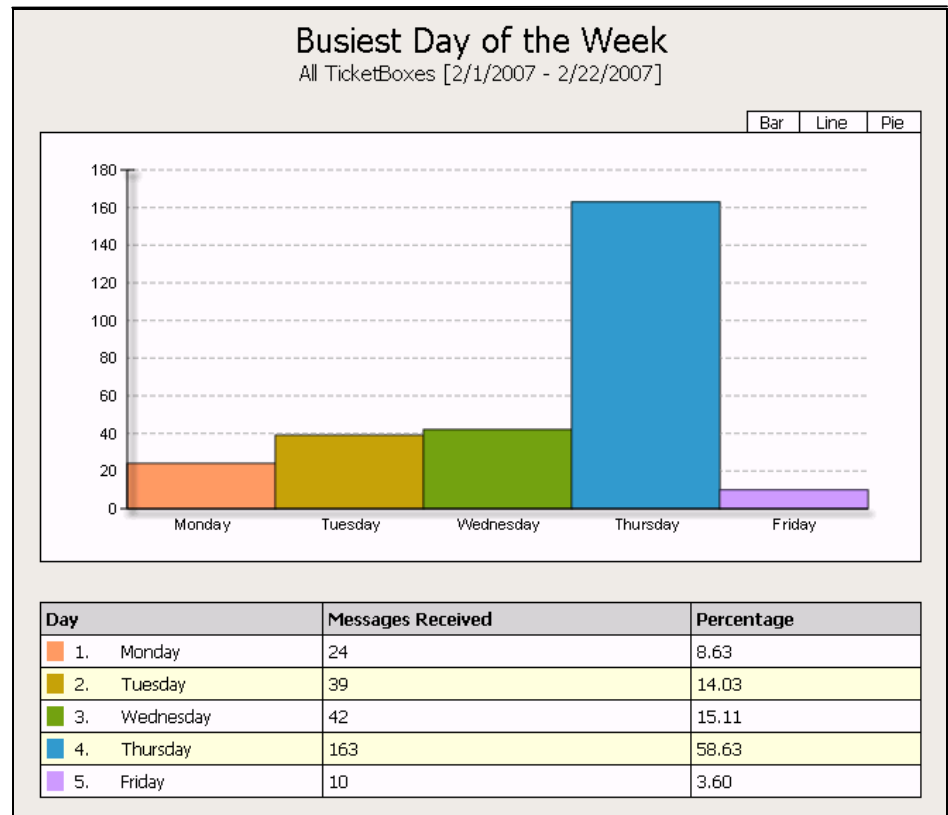
Benchmarking and Quality Management

VisNetic MailFlow includes pre-defined management reports, displaying such metrics as:

- First-contact resolution rate
- Mean-time to close
- Historical view of inbound and outbound messages, specific to agent ticketbox or contact
- Workload distribution

Reports are generated with real-time data, which can be viewed on-screen, printed or downloaded in CVS (Comma Separated Values) format.

Discovering trends can lead to new business practices.

Discovering trends can lead to new business practices. For example, the "Busiest Day of the Week" report shows an unusually high volume of customer email inquiry transactions on Thursday. (See Figure 2.) Therefore, the customer care center manager decides to reallocate agent work hours so that more agents are available on Thursdays.

Figure 2: "Busiest Day of the Week" Report

Day		Messages Received	Percentage
1.	Monday	24	8.63
2.	Tuesday	39	14.03
3.	Wednesday	42	15.11
4.	Thursday	163	58.63
5.	Friday	10	3.60

VisNetic MailFlow is particularly appealing to SMBs that require an affordable and low-maintenance alternative to high-end systems.

<u>Customer Use Scenarios</u>

VisNetic MailFlow is particularly appealing for organizations that require an affordable and low-maintenance alternative to high-end systems, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Email Response Management Systems (ERMS).

Additionally, VisNetic MailFlow is a good fit for:

- Businesses that generate email marketing, but don't have a means by which to manage the email campaign responses.
- Businesses with Web-based email forms or "mailto" addresses.
- Government agencies and representatives, which receive ad hoc email from citizens.
- Businesses with public, generic email addresses, such as info@company.com, for ad hoc customer communication.

Summary

A business that can humanize the customer's email-inquiry experience can influence customer trust and customer loyalty. Customer email management, however, can be unruly. VisNetic MailFlow provides an affordable and easily manageable software solution. Ease-of-use, along with rich agent-centric functionality and management reports, means that agents can center on the customer's needs – without interference from the technology or process.

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About VisNetic MailFlow
http://www.deerfield.com/products/visnetic-mailflow

VisNetic MailFlow is an email management solution designed for businesses who wish to improve their level of email customer service and business intelligence. VisNetic MailFlow combines excellent affordability with super-fast deployment capability and extremely low management burden to offer an incredibly compelling value. First released in 2002, making it one of the most mature email management applications. Today, VisNetic MailFlow is used by over 22,000 agents worldwide – a sampling of which include John Hopkins Medicine, Boston Globe, Blue Nile, Gold Medal Travel Group, Guess Inc. and Lowrance Electronics. Flexible licensing terms includes a 30-day "try before you buy" download and free technical support through an online knowledgebase and email ticket support.

We invite you to experience VisNetic MailFlow. To schedule a guided demo, visit http://www.deerfield.com/products/visnetic-mailflow/demo/index.htm

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